



From the Wire

18WG Career Assistance Advisor



■ Clarification on CSB “tax-free” payment

Kadena members eligible for the Career Status Bonus can avoid taxes on the bonus if they're in the right place at the right time.

Members in a combat tax exclusion zone during the month marking their 15th year of military service pay no taxes on the \$30,000 CSB. A large number of Kadena troops will deploy to such zones in fall this year.

Those eligible for the bonus include all servicemembers who have a Date Initially Entered Military Service after 1 Aug 86 and before 1 Sep 00. The DIEMS is the date members enlisted, not necessarily when they entered basic training. For example, the date someone enters the Delayed Enlistment Program or a commissioning program is his or her DIEMS.

CSB-eligible members can choose between two retirement options. They can elect High 3, which pays 50% of the average of the highest three years of basic pay and features an annual cost of living raise. The other option is REDUX, which enables the member to accept a \$30,000 bonus in return for reduced retirement pay (40% of High 3 as opposed to 50%) and 1% less cost-of-living raise.

Members need only be in the exclusion zone when the payment is effective, not necessarily when it is received. The payment is effective on the month of the members 15th year of Total Active Federal Military Service (TAFMS). The TAFMS is based on the date a member enters basic training. People are encouraged to explore the REDUX retirement plan's short- and long-term financial impacts before making a decision.

■ CCAF offers FAA certification for maintenance troops

Aug. 9, 2002 -- MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. (AETCNS) -- After four years in development, a new certification program offered by the Community College of the Air Force could replace "aircraft mechanic" with "FAA certified aviation maintenance technician" in the job titles of airmen working on military aircraft.

The Joint Service Aviation Maintenance Technician Certification Council, chartered by the Defense Department, recently developed and implemented a Federal Aviation Administration-approved airframe and powerplant training and certification program for airmen in the aircraft maintenance field, said CCAF's chief of Aviation Technical Degree Programs.

"For the Air Force, CCAF will manage and administer the program," said Master Sgt. J. R. Breeding. "The primary goal of the Air Force was to develop a voluntary A&P certification program with tangible benefits for both the Air Force and the individual, and that has been accomplished."

The program standardizes and streamlines the eligibility process for aircraft maintenance troops in obtaining FAA A&P certification, he said. More than 1,700 airmen are currently enrolled in the program.



For Air Force mechanics with a 7-skill level or higher, on-the-job and computer-based training and distance learning courses greatly assist the mechanic in obtaining a certification that will provide experience with and exposure to a broad range of aircraft systems. USAF photo

Sergeant Breeding said benefits of the program are impressive, such as 30 semester hours of college credit awarded by CCAF toward its Aviation Maintenance Technology Associate in Applied Science degree and an agenda that makes the airman a more "diverse and well-rounded" technician.

"It's been a long time coming and took a lot of work," said Tech Sgt. Gregory Doss, NCO in charge of the FAA Certification Program for CCAF. "It promises to be a great program, and what we hear from supporters is, 'It's about time.'"

While it is an excellent recruitment and retention tool, more importantly, it helps the Air Force "take care of our aircraft maintenance troops," Sergeant Breeding said. For Air Force mechanics with a 7-skill level or higher, on-the-job and computer-based training and distance learning courses greatly assist the mechanic in obtaining a certification that will provide experience with and exposure to a broad range of aircraft systems, he said. Certification also helps the person get closer to earning a college degree.

"I feel troops will view the program as a valuable resource for developing critical skills for their Air Force careers and will also consider the program very beneficial for future civilian employment," Sergeant Breeding said.

The commercial airline industry has expressed its approval of the program because of a projected 106,000 mechanic shortage by 2010, and retiring or separating members with the FAA certification will help fill that gap, said Tech. Sgt. Jason Munn, program manager.

For "cream of the crop" mechanics that have a 7-skill level and extensive aircraft maintenance experience, the program fine-tunes their abilities, Sergeant Doss said.

"If you have a technical degree from CCAF and an FAA certification, you are highly marketable in the aviation industry following retirement or separation," he said.

By charter, the certification council is comprised of one voting member each from the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. FAA and industry advisors and technical representatives from various disciplines round out the team.

The council meets annually to address issues of importance regarding all aspects of an aircraft maintenance technician's training and experience, and any military aviation technician may submit topics for consideration to the council through council members, the chairperson or a military service point of contact.

"Having CCAF involved from day one really sold the FAA on this program," Sergeant Breeding said. "We have a professional relationship with the FAA. They know and value CCAF's institutional integrity."

People can get more details from the CCAF Web site at www.maxwell.af.mil/au/ccaf/student.htm.
Carl Bergquist, Air University Public Affairs/AETCNS

■ New PACAF Command Chief talks about quality of life

HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii – Chief Master Sgt. David Popp, Pacific Air Forces new command chief master sergeant, recently outlined his top command issues.

Popp said his top priority is not just maintaining the current level but to assist in improving PACAF quality of life, and fitness programs. Part of that means making sure airmen know what's available at their own installations.

Many times he's noticed there are programs in place to help airmen and their families but airmen don't take advantage of them.

"It's not because they don't want to take part," according to Popp. "It's usually because they just didn't know the program existed. Supervisors can help in his effort by taking the time to show their airmen the opportunities available to them right now in their own backyard."

Popp, who has served two other tours in PACAF at Kadena AB, Japan and at Kunsan AB, Republic of Korea, will travel throughout the command in the coming months to visit with command enlisted personnel. His first trip was to Singapore, Diego Garcia, Thailand and Guam. The Chief said he was impressed with the spirit, attitude, and morale at all the locations. His next trip will be to PACAF's main operating bases in Japan Aug. 20 – Aug. 31.

"It is an extreme honor to serve the men and women of Pacific Air Forces," Popp said. "I have served in the command twice before and look forward to this third tour." *TSgt. Chris Haag/PACAFNS*



■ Commentary: Recognize troops with more than awards

8/15/2002 - COLUMBUS AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. (AFPN) - Read the following two statements and pick the one that is a form of recognition. "Airman Smith you've done a great job on your monthly report" and "Our company grade officer of the quarter is Captain Smith."

Did you pick sentence one or two? If you picked both, you're right. Yes, it was a trick question, but sometimes supervisors lose sight of what recognition really is.

Anyone can read a dictionary, so let me give you my definition of recognition: acknowledging people's contributions. I can tell you it has little impact unless the person on the receiving end believes the recognition is sincere.

If you take a look at the results of military exiting surveys, you will find (one of) the No. 1 reason people leave the Air Force is the lack of recognition or a sense of worth to the organization. Likewise, the recent Air Force chief of staff survey results indicated people are somewhat dissatisfied with the recognition they received.

Well, after numerous question and answer sessions at seminars, airman and noncommissioned officer calls, and just plain talking to people, I realized they were not talking about "formal" programs but rather the informal "pat on the back" for a job well done. This is usually one of the most difficult yet most important tasks for supervisors at all levels.

Supervision is a dynamic environment, and you have to be engaged every second if you want to be successful.

I classify supervisors in three categories:

First, there are **"The Jobbers,"** those people who are so engrossed in the demands of the job that they fail to understand who actually does the work. They take our most valuable resource -- people -- for granted.

Next is **"The Buddy."** These supervisors are engrossed in making sure everyone likes them. They are so concerned about not upsetting someone that they refuse to change the "shop norm." They often lose the respect of their people because they fail to take a stand on anything.

The last type is the **"On-Target Supervisor."** This person builds teams that produce results. The key is ensuring people have a sense of worthiness and are recognized for their contributions. I've often heard these types of supervisors referred to as cheerleaders. They try to catch someone doing something right and recognize it. Unfortunately, we too often fall into one of the first two traps, but we should strive to be an "On-Target Supervisor."

Recognition, like anything else if overdone, can dilute its effectiveness. Finding that fine line between overuse and effective recognition is an art, but if you want to be a great artist, you have to practice.

Start by catching people doing something right and thank them for their contributions. Plaques and coins are nice, but it doesn't take a material item to show your appreciation. A simple pat on the back will do. *Chief Master Sgt. James Roy/14th Flying Training Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant*

If you take a look at the results of military exiting surveys, you will find (one of) the No. 1 reason people leave the Air Force is... lack of recognition or sense or worth to the organizations.

On the lighter side



Can you guys sew a pocket on for my cell phone?

Take advantage of the Family Support Center's resume assistance to ensure you don't "impress" a potential employer with anything like these actual resume submissions:

- Let's meet, so you can 'ooh' and 'aah' over my experience
- I have an excellent track record, although I am not a horse
- Failed bar exam with relatively high grades
- It's best for employers that I not work with people
- I was working for my mom until she decided to move
- I procrastinate, especially when the task is unpleasant
- Personal interests: donating blood: 14 gallons so far
- Wholly responsible for two (2) failed financial institutions
- Instrumental in ruining entire organization for Midwest Chain store
- Finished eighth in my class of 10

- As posted on the Internet site <http://www.meyerweb.com/>.

■ NCO finds grass greener in Air Force

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AFPN) -- Taking the Air Force and its benefits for granted never crossed Aaron Clark's mind. As a matter of fact, if asked in early 1990 what his future held, he had no plans to join the Air Force --period!

Until 1990, Aaron Clark was happy working jobs in construction, as a lifeguard or as a ski instructor in Sugar Mountain, N.C.

As has been the case for many other young men and women, things changed dramatically when he and his wife, Shelly, faced the prospect of being new parents and the responsibility that comes with starting a family.

Now, Aaron Clark, an Air Force staff sergeant and weapons load crew chief, reflects on the early days of his career.

"My wife was pregnant at the time, and we decided it was time I got a job that could actually pay the bills and support a family," Sergeant Clark said. "Parked on the Blue Ridge Parkway one day, we were discussing how we would raise our child, and there I decided to join the Air Force."

"I was excited," Shelly said of the decision. "I grew up near Dover Air Force Base (Delaware) and always thought the Air Force would be a great way of life...traveling and meeting new people."

Aaron Clark entered basic training in July 1990, choosing the mechanics career field, later being selected to be a bomb loader.

During his first tour, Clark said he experienced the normal things any weapons troop does, including deploying to unique locations such as Las Vegas, Puerto Rico and even Holland.

"Of course I had to do a Saudi deployment," Sergeant Clark said, "to include some nice stateside (temporary duties)."

Then in 1995, the same stubborn young man who told his parents he would never join the military re-enlisted.

"As soon as I re-enlisted, I got orders to Korea," said Sergeant Clark. "Osan Air Base was a neat experience and I met new friends, but I think the worst part was by then I had two children -- two birthdays, an anniversary and Christmas away from your family is tough."

When looking at prospects for a follow-on assignment, the Clarks decided on Hill AFB in Utah since some friends were being assigned there as well. At Hill, Sergeant Clark faced two rotations a year to Southwest Asia, a future he and Shelly did not relish, he said. After seven years of marriage, they had only spent three anniversaries together. It was time to call it quits.

"This is it," Shelly said. "Let's see what our options are and see what we can do."

"I applied for an early out and was told I had to provide proof of outside employment that will pay better than the military," said Clark.

Clark's father was opening a new construction company and was happy to provide the documentation needed for the early-out separation. His commander approved it, and just like that, he was a civilian again. He had no college and zero schooling to support his job prospects on the outside, but he had a plan. Who would doubt that going to work in the family business could fail. It appeared to be a lucrative business.

"I started to work with my dad, and it was great...only one problem," he said. "I'd work for three weeks, then wait for a new lot to be cleared, foundation to be poured and everything."

It was a cycle he endured for almost three months. The money was great when he was working, said Clark. However, there was no money when he was not. Clark, his wife and two kids were living on his father's boat in Daytona Beach, Fla., at the time -- something he and the kids saw as an adventure. Shelly did not.



Staff Sgt. Aaron Clark works on an F-15 on the flight line at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. After a break in service, the NCO rejoined the Air Force for the quality of life it provides his family. USAF photo by Master Sgt. Rob Fuller

"I love going on boats," said Shelly, "but living on one is a different story. It didn't pan out."

It did not take long for the adventure to wear thin. Clark's mother and stepfather asked him and his family to move to North Carolina to work as a foreman on their Christmas tree farm and landscaping company.

"So the Clark family packed up again and moved to North Carolina," Clark said. Christmas trees are beautiful, he said, but very few know just how hard the work the Christmas tree business is.

"Most of the Christmas tree farms in North Carolina are on the side of a mountain," Clark said. "You have to carry a backpack with 50 pounds of fertilizer up the mountain, fertilize 10,000 trees and shear them in preparation for the market."

The work does not end there, he added. Each tree must be cut down, taken down the mountain, baled and loaded on a tractor-trailer. But, when Christmas was over, so was the job until March.

Still, Clark's determination and pride drove him on. Rejoining the Air Force was not an option.

"I was not going to look back and I didn't even want to think about the Air Force," he said.

He tried a ski shop, but they only offered \$7 an hour, he said. That was not enough to pay rent and support a family of four, but he made ends meet for a few months.

Then another opportunity presented itself. Shelly's dad owned a construction company in Maryland. So once again, the Clark family pulled up roots that had not yet taken hold, and trudged toward another light in the tunnel.

"I love moving, but we were getting further and further behind (financially)," said Shelly. "The grass was always greener..."

In Maryland, with everything in storage, the family moved in with Shelly's parents. The \$10 an hour and relatively steady work was a definite improvement. They were even paying off bills. Yet, it was not enough to find their own place or provide medical insurance.

"Reality finally set in..." Shelly said one day, "What are we doing? I think you need to look into getting back into the Air Force."

"Reality finally set in," said Clark. "My wife and I were talking one day. The entire time we'd been out of the Air Force we didn't have a home. We'd lived on my dad's boat, then with my mother and now with my wife's family. "Shelly said one day, 'What are we doing?' She said then, 'I think you need to look into getting back into the Air Force.'"

"I had already done some research and called a couple of recruiters before approaching Aaron with the thought," said Shelly.

Initially Clark fought it, even tried to join the Florida Highway Patrol, but things just did not work out the way he wanted.

"One day I called a recruiter," Clark said. "He told me I had already been out too long and I had too much time in service from the first time to re-enter."

Now, the former bomb loader had a new mission.

Realizing how good he and his family once had it, he was again determined not to give up. He tried recruiters, anybody and everybody he knew. Finally the break came he was looking for.

"A friend called me from the Pentagon saying he knew a recruiter in Pennsylvania who understood my situation and thought he could help," said Clark.

A month later, Clark found himself in familiar surroundings going through the Military Entrance Processing Station. He was back in the Air Force. Unfortunately, the break in service came with a price. There would be no re-enlistment bonus and he lost half of his time in grade. The only way back in was to rejoin his former career field, which was critically manned. So he gladly did, and found himself where he knew he belonged.

Four years later, Clark is glad he made the decision to come back in. He made staff sergeant the first time around and hopes to make technical sergeant soon, or maybe even try for a commission some day.

"I'm shooting for 20 now," he said. "I've recently finished my (Community College of the Air Force) degree and won Team Tyndall (Noncommissioned Officer) of the Quarter. Although those aren't my main goals in life, they're things I didn't find important before and it's almost like, 'Hey, I'm part of the Air Force now.'"

Clark likes to share his experiences during Right Decision seminars. He said he hopes his example will help someone make the right decision. Looking at the determination in this man's face, there are no regrets, just experiences and some lessons learned at the school of hard knocks.

"I think we appreciate our family life more now," said Shelly, "and the military family is wonderful, pulling through in times of need or separation. The staying power of the military is the best."

Down the road, Staff Sgt. Aaron Clark sees himself once again checking out a new job and new surroundings, but this time he hopes to explore the grass a little closer to home -- retraining to another job in the Air Force. *Master Sgt. Rob Fuller/325th Fighter Wing Public Affairs*



2002 CSAF Quality of Life Survey (Condensed version)

I want to thank you in advance for taking time to participate in the 2002 Chief of Staff Quality of Life survey. This is a great opportunity for you to provide direct feedback about the Air Force's quality of life programs. Your participation in this survey will provide valuable information to Air Force leaders as they seek to improve the quality of life of all airmen.

Today, more than ever, the American people look to their men and women in uniform as symbols of America's strength, power, and determination. Your service matters, and so does the quality of your life and that of your family's. The Air Force's Quality of Life survey, which is being conducted this month, is a critical tool to help achieve this end. It serves as a vector check for our quality of life programs and ensures that we're pursuing the right actions.

The survey's findings will provide our senior leaders with valuable insights into AF programs and give our installation commanders greater impact at the local level. Since the validity of the results hinges upon robust participation by all members, commander support is crucial to our success!

The survey will be randomly provided to approximately one quarter of our members. I ask all commanders to encourage their people to take the survey and provide their leadership with the feedback required to improve the way we are doing business. Please invest a few minutes of your time to provide your leadership with the feedback we need to move forward. I thank each of you for your continued dedication to our great nation.



■ Finance bills address concurrent receipt, tax issues

August 6, 2002 -- Last week the House chose members for a House-Senate conference that will hammer out the details of the fiscal 2003 National Defense Authorization Bill. However, the long-awaited conference will not take place until after the August recess.

One of many differences to be decided will be whether to overturn the century-old law that forces military retirees to forfeit one dollar of retired pay for each dollar of disability compensation received from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Senate version of the NDAA would authorize full concurrent receipt of retired pay and disability compensation.

The House version, on the other hand, would authorize concurrent receipt only for retirees with 60 percent or more disability compensation, to be phased in over five years. The Office of Management and Budget has recommended that the President veto the NDAA if it includes any concurrent receipt provisions.

Pending bills could provide tax benefits for servicemembers. American Forces Press Service reports that several initiatives in various bills before Congress now could sweeten military members' tax benefits if they become law. Sure to be the most popular with the troops are proposals to extend combat-zone tax exclusions to Korea and members serving unaccompanied tours outside the United States. Another break addressed in several pieces of pending legislation in both houses of Congress would exempt service members from a normal two- year residency rule for claiming a tax exclusion on a certain amount of profit on a home sale.

Under current law, individuals who live in a house at least two of the five years prior to the date they sell it can exclude a certain amount of their gain from taxes. Each homeowner can exclude the first \$250,000 of gain, up to \$500,000 for married individuals filing jointly.

The current bind for some military members is that owning the home isn't enough -- if military service were to take them away from the home long enough, the two-out-of-five-years rule might disqualify them for this tax break. A third issue is the exemption from federal taxes of the whole \$6,000 death gratuity paid to families of military members who die on active duty. Only \$3,000 is tax-exempt now. *Military Report/Courtesy of Armed Forces News*

■ General briefs personnel issues

Aug. 19, 2002 -- EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, ALASKA--The Air Force deputy chief of staff for personnel briefed the Iceman Team on the latest personnel issues facing Air Force people Aug. 19.

Lt. Gen. Richard Brown opened his briefings by saying today's airmen, junior NCOs and officers shouldn't accept high operations tempo as the standard — even in today's smaller Air Force. "More than 50 percent of the Air Force joined after 1990. They never knew the old days. They think this ops tempo is normal, but we've got to get our arms around it."

While the general acknowledged Air Force manpower had slipped from 559,000 in 1990 to less than 360,000 in 2000, he pointed out that until recently much of this manpower was assigned to major commands without mobility missions. These commands included Air Education and Training Command and Air Force Materiel Command. Even some combatant commands — like Pacific Air Forces — were immune to deployments because its forces were committed to support operations in Korea. These restrictions forced the remaining commands — like Air Combat Command and United States Air Forces in Europe — to fill the Air Force's growing mobility mission. That's why in recent years, AETC, AFMC and PACAF assets have started filling mobility commitments in Southwest Asia and elsewhere. Freeing up these personnel resources was a necessary move to ease the mobility burden. "... the rest of the Air Force had to step in and help," he explained.

While more evenly distributing mobility taskings among active, Reserve and Guard units was one fix, Brown feels there's a need to decrease the number of personnel who are held in student status.

"There are about 5,000-6,000 people who completed technical training, but are awaiting an assignment or who are waiting to start training who are not here helping you



"Stop loss was the most difficult thing we did. I know we stopped folks from leaving the Air Force who had jobs lined up and other plans. But, it was the right decision because we called up 38,000 people from their families, jobs and businesses..."

"...We had to end Stop Loss because we have a predictable mission in front of us and we had to let people go on with their lives."

- Lt. Gen. Richard Brown
Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel

accomplish the mission," Brown said. "There's people now who can help take the pressure off of Eielson, and the rest of the Air Force, we just need to get them out of student status faster. Those new enlistees and young officers are anxious to see what the real Air Force is all about. They want to be a part of it as much as we need them. We're making a lot of headway at flowing them from training into the field."

...the Air Force has increased promotion rates for both officers and NCOs until fiscal year 2008. Promotion to senior master sergeant, for example, will increase from 2 percent to 2.5 percent of the total enlisted force in .1 increments over the next five years

Up until Sept. 11, adjustments like streamlining the Air Force's training system and an overall reduction in taskings helped bring the service's operations tempo under control, according to Brown. These gains, however, were offset by post-Sept. 11 military operations. That's why Air Force officials enacted Stop Loss and mobilized 38,000 Guard and Reservists to help ease the burden.

"Stop loss was the most difficult thing we did. I know we stopped folks from leaving the Air Force who had jobs lined up and other plans. But, it was the right decision because we called up 38,000 people from their families, jobs and businesses. The waiver opportunity, approved at 82 percent, allowed 4,000 out of 5,600 people to separate. We had to end Stop Loss because we have a predicable mission in front of us and we had to let people

go on with their lives."

There is an increase manpower requirement linked to post 9-11 and 17 functional areas are stressed. Long-term solutions include merging the manpower and personnel career fields. Additionally, the Air Force will conduct a core competency study to aid in making some military to civilian conversions, Brown said.

"Right now we need to clean house first and to do that our functionals need to determine the impact. The last thing you need is for me to tell you where you need the uniforms. The overall concept of the core competency study is to move more uniforms from tail to tooth," Brown said.

One step has already been taken to streamline the manpower and personnel career fields. "The Air Force is the only service that separated manpower from personnel. They are going to be remarried — the concept has been agreed to," Brown said.

One personnel issue more visible to the force is reenlistments. First term airmen are reenlisting at 62 percent, second term at 77 percent and career airmen at 99 percent.

But, the Air Force is still having trouble retaining enough journeymen. More than 110 percent of three and seven skill levels are reenlisting, but only 80 percent of its five levels are.

To help combat these issues, the Air Force has increased promotion rates for both officers and NCOs until fiscal year 2008. Promotion to senior master sergeant, for example, will increase from 2 percent to 2.5 percent of the total enlisted force in .1 increments over the next five years.

Officers being considered for promotion to major and lieutenant colonel can expect to see their promotion rates increase to 90-95 percent and 75-85 percent respectively.

Another issue Brown discussed was how the Air Expeditionary Force construction will impact the assignment cycle.

"Over the last 20 years we've had a summer rotation system driven by the fact Air Force members have families. Driving the assignment system is the 16,000 remote assignments that need to be filled. We're looking at synchronizing the assignment system with the AEF cycle," Brown said.

"The Air Force is looking at a three-cycle system versus a four-cycle process. But it's not just personnel who's trying to synchronize, its everyone so we can get into the AEF mindset."

Staff Sgt Jennifer Gregoire, 354th Fighter Wing Public Affairs/PACAFNS.

Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf...on retention

"One day I discussed my disillusionment with Whelan, who knew exactly what to say to make me stay: "There are two ways to approach it. Number one is to get out; number two is to stick around and someday, when you have more rank, fix the problems. But don't forget, if you get out, the bad guys win." It Doesn't Take a Hero, 1992, 82-83.